

LEWIS COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
PLANNING DIVISION

MEMORANDUM

To: Planning Commission

From: Jerry Basler

Date: February 15th, 2011

Subject: Water Resource Inventory Area (WRIAs) 25 & 26

The Department of Ecology is in the process of reviewing Water Resource Inventory Areas (WRIAs) 25 and 26. Inventory Area 26 includes portions of Lewis County. The Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board was selected to function as the lead agency in the process. A selected group of local officials and citizens appointed to a WRIA planning committee have been meeting over the past several years to discuss the numerous issues involved with proposed adjustments to water usage and a possible basin closure.

A comprehensive document called the “Grays-Elochoman and Cowlitz Watershed Management Plan” calls for the closure of Inventory Area 26. The WRIA planning committee has been discussing the closure issue. A closure generally means no new water rights are issued, existing water rights can continue, and an exempt well may be limited, which are those wells that utilize up to 5000 gpd.

A portion of the study revolves around the effects of water demand on spawning and rearing habitat for fish species in streams and tributaries flowing into the main rivers such as the Cowlitz, which relates to in-stream flows on rivers and streams.

Attached is a draft schedule of the WRIA planning committee. The WRIA planning committee will take all of the information presented on estimated water usage, calculation studies, future estimates, and other available information related to the basin to formulate a recommendation to Ecology on water use allocation.